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ABSTRACT

The International Standard Bibliographic Description for Monographic Publications (ISBD(M)) is an international standard developed by the International Federation of Library Associations Working Group; it seeks to introduce uniformity in the bibliographic descriptions prepared in national cataloging agencies throughout the world for use in national bibliographies, or catalogs, or for other purposes. Standardization is accomplished by presenting selected bibliographic data in a prescribed order and identifying the data through the arbitrary use of symbols which happen to be punctuation marks. Although the standard bibliographic description is of vital importance for the conversion of data to machine-readable form, it also facilitates the comprehension of entries in unfamiliar languages and permits descriptions of various origins to be integrated readily into a single system. Virtually all of the provisions of the standard have been incorporated into the revised rules for description in the North American Text of the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, so that national cataloging agencies in the Western hemisphere may participate in the international effort to achieve universal bibliographic control. (Author/LS)

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ISBD(M): BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION

by

Elizabeth L. Tate

Paper presented at the program meeting, "International Standards and the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules," sponsored by the American Library Association Resources & Technical Services Division Cataloging & Classification and Serials Sections on Tuesday, 9 July 1974

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ISBD(M): BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION

by Elizabeth L. Tate

This scene takes place in the catalog department of a large university library. The dramatis personae are Mrs. Hewitt, the reviser, and Mr. Archibald, the cataloger. The time, as you can clearly see from what I've just said, is post-Women's Lib, but pre-ISBD. Any resemblance to any persons or libraries, living or dead, is purely coincidental. Mrs. Hewitt is seated at her desk with an open book and several catalog cards before her. Beside her, seated on a stool, is Mr. Archibald. Mrs. Hewitt speaks first.

"I don't understand why you have used a comma here to separate the title from the subtitle."

"It seemed the right punctuation to use, Mrs. Hewitt."

"A semicolon would be a much better choice, Mr. Archibald."

"My English teacher instructed us to use a comma for similar cases, Mrs. Hewitt. And anyway there's a comma on the title-page."

"Mr. Archibald, it doesn't matter what your English teacher told you; in cataloging we follow the AA rules. Rule 133 says, 'The title proper ... is transcribed exactly as to order, wording, spelling, accentuation, and other diacritical marks ... but not necessarily as to punctuation and capitalization.' Now you look at all these examples I have here to see how it's done."

"Mrs. Hewitt, on this Library of Congress card there's a comma after the title."

"Humph, Library of Congress - at that place the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. Now, in this department we always use a semicolon ..."

Twenty minutes later Mr. Archibald, unconvinced but obliging, returns to his desk to change the comma to a semicolon.

The next act occurs several months later - post ISBD. Mr. Archibald is again discussing his work with Mrs. Hewitt, but the discussion concerns only such matters as choice or form of entry, desirable added entries, etc., because each subtitle has been separated from the title proper by a space-colon-space, as required by the ISBD(M).

The scene shifts to the acquisition department of the same university library five years later. Alice, a young paraprofessional, is looking disconsolately at a long list of citations. As she heads toward the catalog with the list in her hand, the following silent soliloquy ensues: "Miss Hemingway says I'm to find out if these titles and editions are in the library, and if they aren't, then I've gotta look in those foreign bibliographies to find out the prices. What awful languages! Don't those people have any vowels? There's nothing here but "x's" and "z's" and "y's" and "k's". I told 'em it was Spanish I took in high school. Well, thank heaven, these have all been published recently and not back in the dark ages like yesterday's list. At least the dashes and the slashes will help me find my way around. And the current bibliographies will look the same, too; I won't have to spend an hour figuring each one out before I can use it. I sure hope Miss Hemingway gives Margaret the next list of old stuff to search."

In case this is a soliloquy you doubt ever got soliloquized, just write it off as my ploy to direct your attention to the factor that has improved the quality of life for Mr. Archibald and Alice - the International standard bibliographic description for monographic publications. I should like this afternoon to tell you how the standard came into existence, acquaint you with its principal features, discuss the cataloging code revision that is based on the standard, and offer a few suggestions for coping. You will prefer that I not discuss coping for programmers, since I'm no expert in this field, so all computer people may

now leave in search of the MARC Development staff or go out for a short beer.

In October 1961 a unique event occurred - the International Conference on Cataloguing Principles. During the McGill Institute in 1960 when the international conference was in the planning stage, someone in my hearing asked the Executive Secretary, A. H. Chaplin, if the planners hoped that the conference would result in international acceptance of the new cataloging code. His reply, in the negative, was most informative. As I recall, he pointed out that catalog code revision was then underway or was being anticipated in many European countries. Simultaneously, emerging countries, on the threshold of library development, were searching for systems of bibliographic control, with each following its own preference in selecting a model. If the representatives of countries with such disparate cataloging experiences could merely reach agreement on certain fundamental principles of entry, the planners would deem the conference a success. It was a success and it paved the way for consideration of the next problems.

One of these problems acquired a sense of urgency because of subsequent developments. 1966 marked the beginning of the National Program for Acquisitions and Cataloging. The shared cataloging facet of this program, as you know, is based on the premise of the exchangeability of data produced by well-established national cataloging agencies. However, when the output of the various national bibliographies was channelled into one stream, the multifarious differences in descriptive cataloging practices were inescapable. Though the human mind can easily adjust to these variations in a manual system, the computer cannot. The growth of shared cataloging had been paralleled by the development of computer based systems in several countries. If machine readable data were ever to be directly useable on an exchange basis, it was imperative that uniform methods of bibliographic description be used. The task of preparing a standard thus became the most important of the problems identified by the Paris conference.

Accordingly, the IFLA Committee on Uniform Cataloguing Rules organized a conference of some forty people, who assembled in a new hotel on the outskirts of Copenhagen in August 1969. The cataloging experts at this international meeting envisioned a system for the international exchange of information in which a national cataloging agency in each country would be responsible for creating and distributing, in either eye-readable or machine-readable form, standard bibliographic descriptions for the publications originating in that country. They recognized that "The effectiveness of the system would depend upon the maximum standardization of the form and content of the bibliographic description," to use the words of their resolution.[1] To implement the resolution, they agreed upon several major elements to be covered by the standard and appointed a Working Group to draft the text. A. J. Wells and Michael Gorman, of the British National Bibliography, served as chairman and secretary, respectively, with France, Hungary, the Netherlands, West Germany, and the USA represented in the membership. The Working Group was as good as its name and in December 1971 published a preliminary edition. During the next two years, the ISBD(M) was translated into Dutch, French, Hungarian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish, and was adopted for use in eight national bibliographies.

As is well known to those who have supervised staff or taught school, any instruction more complex than "sit down" can be misunderstood, and even "sit down" in translation is susceptible to misinterpretation. It is not surprising then

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[1] International Federation of Library Associations. ISBD(M) - International standard bibliographic description for monographic publications. — 1st standard ed. — London : IFLA Committee on Cataloguing, 1974. — p. vii.

that the application of some of the provisions of the standard produced different results in different countries. To take corrective action a two-day meeting was held last August prior to the IFLA conference at Grenoble. There were thirty-five participants representing organizations using or about to use the ISBD(M) or organizations interested in the standard like the International Standards Organization Technical Committee 46 and UNISIST. The changes proposed at the meeting were primarily for the purpose of amplifying or clarifying the text, for the participants were in agreement that the basic structure of the standard is satisfactory. The Working Group again went to work to produce the first standard edition of the International standard bibliographic description for monographic publications, issued in March 1974. The IFLA Committee on Cataloguing, the publishers, thoughtfully provided a recommended catalogue entry on the verso of the title-page. I have copied it for you on the first page of the handout you found on your chair, along with the recommended catalogue entry for the ISBD(S) and information about the availability of both. The International standard bibliographic description for serials also was published in March 1974; other companion pieces, like a standard for audiovisual materials or maps, may well be appearing in the future.

$ 5.00 - Canadian = $ 5.25 USA

As you might surmise, the ISBD(M) is not exactly bedside reading because the plot's a bit thin. I promise, therefore, not to read extensively from the text. However, I would like to summarize and quote enough to give you the flavor of it. The standard has been designed for monographs in printed format, and primarily for current publications. It includes no provisions for the special problems of older books. The purpose of the ISBD(M), according to the Introductory Notes, is "to aid the international communication of bibliographic information,

It does this by (i) making records from different sources interchangeable, (ii) assisting in the interpretation of records across language barriers, and (iii) assisting in the conversion of bibliographic records to machine readable form."[2] To accomplish these purposes the standard employs four devices. First, it specifies the kind of information to be included in the bibliographic description. Second, it indicates the order in which these data are to be recorded. Third, it prescribes the symbols by which the data are to be identified, these symbols being punctuation marks combined with spaces. Fourth, it spells out the preferred sources of information for each category of information. The glossary at the beginning of the standard contains two new terms with which catalogers will need to become familiar. The first is "area." An area is a major section of the bibliographic description. The second new word is "element". An element is "a word or phrase, or a group of characters, representing a distinct item of bibliographic information and forming part of an area of the bibliographic description."[3] Thus the phrase "prepared by the Bureau of National Affairs" is an element of the title and statement of authorship area.

Each bibliographic description consists of seven areas, presented in this order: title and statement of authorship area; edition area; imprint area; collation area; series area; notes area; and International Standard Book Number, binding, and price area. For each of these areas the standard designates prime sources of information. For example, the prime sources of information for the edition area are the title-page, other preliminaries, and the colophon. The term "other preliminaries" has been introduced into the standard to describe concisely

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[2] Ibid., p. 1.

[3] Ibid., p. 2.

the pages preceding the title-page, the verso of the title-page, the front cover, and the spine. Data from any of the prime sources may be included in the description without brackets. For each of the seven areas, the standard enumerates the content of that area, indicates the prescribed punctuation, and outlines the detailed specifications.

Let us sample some of the provisions for the title and statement of authorship area. The standard begins, "The first element of the title and statement of authorship area is the title proper. The title proper is transcribed from the title-page. It is transcribed exactly as to wording but not as to capitalization and punctuation ... The title proper is the first element of the description even when it is preceded on the title-page by the statement of authorship, other titles, series titles or other matter. Where a statement of authorship, name of publisher, or other information is linguistically an integral part of the title proper, it is transcribed as such."[4] If you are experiencing that "déjà vu" feeling, it is not surprising for most of the provisions of the standard express the substance of the Anglo-American cataloging rules.

To conclude my comments on the standard itself, I should like to quote again from the Introductory Notes. "The ISBD(M) is intended to provide all the descriptive information required in a range of bibliographic activities. It therefore includes elements which may be essential to one or another of these activities, but not to all. It is recommended that in each country it should be the responsibility of the national bibliographic agency to make a complete description of each publication, containing all elements set out in the ISBD(M), except so far as it may omit elements stated to be optional."[5] Because the

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[4] Ibid., p. 7-8.

[5] Ibid., p. 1.

intent is to provide all the data needed for a variety of purposes, the standard has been designed to produce a bibliographic description that is self-sufficient without the heading. However, the description will not customarily be used by itself, but will appear in bibliographies or catalogs as part of an entry with a main heading, tracing, or whatever else is appropriate to that tool. To illustrate the self-sufficiency of an ISBD(M) bibliographic description and to suggest its potential for interpreting records across language barriers, I have included in your handout five entries without headings in what for me at least are non-communicating languages - with the exception of the German which was added as a touchstone.

In the United States the ISBD(M) could not be put into effect as an isolated set of instructions. Our rules for description are once again part of a complete code, and for this reason the first step toward implementation had to be the revision of chapter six of the Anglo-American cataloging rules. When the authors of the code began to plan for the revision, they had high hopes that a single British and North American Text might result. Unfortunately, the differences in style and content between the two versions of chapter six could have been eliminated only with the expenditure of far more editorial time than was available. The idea was abandoned and Michael Gorman of the British Library was assigned the task of revising the British Text while Paul Winkler of L.C. prepared the draft for the North American Text. The draft was reviewed, emended, and approved by the ALA and CLA cataloging committees and it has just been published as a separate by the ALA.

If you make a detailed comparison of these revised rules with the ISBD(M), you will discover that almost all of the specifications and a great many of the options have been adopted. However, you might be interested in hearing about

the few provisions of the standard that were rejected or modified. The ISBD(M) regards an alternative title as part of the title proper; in the AACR the alternative title is included in the category of "other title", primarily because of the effect on added entries when it is defined as title proper. For multi-lingual title-pages the ISBD(M) recommends repetition in various languages of bibliographic data like author statements; the revised AACR strives for a more concise entry by curtailing the amount of repetition. The ISBD(M) treats numbered theses as series; seeing many disadvantages and few advantages to this practice, the authors of the AACR decided to omit ~~this~~ that proviso from the revision. The ISBD(M) devotes a separate section to a two-level description of multi-volume publications, designed principally for listings in national bibliographies; since other rules in chapter six of the AACR provide adequately for these alternatives for cataloging purposes, the section was entirely omitted. The one other modification, which has already been pointed out in the literature, concerns the prime source of information for the International Standard Book Number.[6] The ISBD(M) says "anywhere"; the AACR says "anywhere in the publication or in data supplied by the publisher and accompanying the book." The reason for that change is purely practical. As you know, many catalogers are very thorough and dearly love the research required for cataloging. There was always the danger with an instruction like "anywhere" that some might never have come home again.

The process of revising the rules for description brought to light a few bibliographical problems covered by the AACR but not encompassed in the ISBD(M). Since most were minor, like the problem of chronograms, the present rule was simply transferred to the revision. However, one proved to be quite a sticky problem, related to the ISBD(S) as well as to the ISBD(M). A solution was devised

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[6] G. Swanson, "ISBD, standard or secret?" Library journal, v. 98, no. 2 (January 15, 1973), p. 128.

that seemed consonant with the spirit of the Standards, but the result will have to be regarded as provisional, pending further consideration of the question by the IFLA Working Group. The difficulty concerns series notes, and in particular those series notes to which a statement of authorship must be added to a generic title in order to identify the series properly. The solution is not a radical departure from past practice but the explanation is highly technical and would bore most everyone here, so I shall oblige you to find the answer for yourself in rule 142E.

Revising the rules to accommodate the ISBD(M) offered an excellent opportunity to accomplish some other objectives. In 1967 the Rules for descriptive cataloging in the Library of Congress with little modification became chapter six of the Anglo-American code. To reflect the wider applicability of the code it seemed desirable to eliminate statements of L. C. policy from the text. The few such statements that remain have been relegated to footnotes in this version. At the same time, the Principal Descriptive Cataloger incorporated into the text all of the changes previously made in the rules for description and announced in Cataloging service, and he made certain editorial changes to clarify ambiguities and solve problems that had surfaced during the past six years. When you have your own copy in hand, you will notice that the revision supersedes not only chapter six but chapter nine as well. This brief chapter provided rules for the description of photographic reproductions, all of which have been modified as required by the ISBD(M) and subsumed into chapter six.

To review briefly the ground we have just covered, the ISBD(M), an international standard developed by the IFLA Working Group, seeks to introduce uniformity into the bibliographic descriptions prepared in national cataloging agencies throughout the world for use in national bibliographies, or catalogs,

or for other purposes. The standard relates to description only and does not deal with questions of choice or form of entry. Standardization is accomplished by presenting selected bibliographic data in a prescribed order and identifying the data through the arbitrary use of symbols which happen to be punctuation marks. Although the standard bibliographic description is of vital importance for the conversion of data to machine-readable form, it also facilitates the comprehension of entries in unfamiliar languages and permits descriptions of various origins to be integrated readily into a single system. The ISBD(M), which has already been adopted in at least eight other countries, is now being implemented here. Virtually all of the provisions of the standard have been incorporated into the revised rules for description in the North American Text of the AACR, so that the national cataloging agencies on this side of the Atlantic may participate in the effort to achieve universal bibliographic control.

That's all very laudable, some of you are probably saying, but what does this mean for me? Isn't everyone going to require re-education? If you are a descriptive cataloger, the answer is "yes" - to some extent. You will have to examine the revised rules thoroughly and consult them frequently as you begin to prepare the new style entries. Just when you think you've got the hang of it, you will need to watch carefully so that you do not subconsciously revert to a comma where a space-slash-space ought to be. Descriptive catalogers certainly will need some reorientation, but once the new punctuation becomes a habit, the changes will not seem drastic. At L.C. the descriptive catalogers have just completed brief introductory training in anticipation of the adoption of the rules about the first of ~~August~~ Sept. In the handout you will find four of the examples developed by the Cataloging Instruction Office, showing both old and new entries, along with the corresponding title-pages. From the tapes

that we made during these training sessions, I have compiled a guide for the descriptive catalogers in the L.C. overseas offices. The guide, which must be used with the revised text in hand, calls attention, rule by rule, to most of the changes and reports the Principal Descriptive Cataloger's answers to some of the questions the catalogers asked. I have brought some extra copies of this guide for descriptive catalogers in the audience who might find it helpful.

If you are not a descriptive cataloger but some other kind of librarian, the revised rules will have less impact. You will hear your colleagues in the catalog department talk about "areas," "elements" and "other title information." You will need to get used to the new punctuation pattern. In imprints you will see "s.l." and "s.n." instead of "n.p." Reference librarians and bibliographers will need to be aware that date of publication is now defined as the year of publication of the first impression of an edition and many imprints will include a printing date also. In some series notes you will find an International Standard Serial Number. Some data like price and original imprint for reprint editions will appear in different places on the card. But the catalog entry will continue to provide you with the same information as before and little conscious effort on your part will be required to adjust.

If you are not a librarian at all but a catalog user, you may not even realize the millenium has arrived. Few of the elements of the international standard bibliographic descriptions are innovations. Consequently, many of the changes I have mentioned today are not new but are already in the system. The 1941 rules, for example, required the use of ellipses for omissions and took for granted the transcription of an author statement for each entry. Since European national bibliographies have supplied descriptive data for most of the entries

distributed in the shared cataloging program, abbreviations like "il." or "ill." for illustrations can already be found in card catalogs in this country, along with quite a wide variety of collations. Although the arbitrary use of punctuation marks may at first seem strange to the reader, today's world is full of symbols that communicate across national boundaries. Signs beside the highways tell the foreign motorist in pictures that he can expect a steep hill, a sharp curve, or a school crossing. Numbers intermixed with plus, minus, multiplication, division or equals signs, communicate ideas to mathematicians who otherwise could converse only in pidgin English. Rock and roll artists are provoked into sound by a succession of ciphers with flags spaced out along a bunch of lines. Catalog use studies indicate that the only descriptive data in the entry of interest to most users are the author, the title, and the call number or location. Those few readers who pore over L.C. cards have already been exposed to hieroglyphics like asterisks and have survived. I shall be very much surprised if the introduction of the ISBD(M) proves to be a traumatic experience for the catalog user.

Some time ago when I was surveying the literature for another paper, I had occasion to read all of the reviews of the Anglo-American cataloging rules that I could locate. Throughout these reviews three criticisms were levelled at the code. It was faulted first because of the failure to produce a truly international code, secondly, because of the failure to revise the rules for description, and thirdly, because of the failure to anticipate the new technologies. Surely, this revision of the rules of description to conform to the International standard bibliographic description for monographic publications should serve at least in part to answer those criticisms.